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Foundations of College Writing

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The Perceptions of Men and Women at College

Problem

Around the age of three, people might start to notice the difference between boys and girls. When children are younger, they might perceive that the opposite sex is “yucky” or has “cooties”. When they become older, their bodies go through changes that make them seem even more different from the opposite sex. . Then, you become an adult and it is time to go off and start college. Even though men and women may go to the same college, have the same classes and even live in the same hall, is there experience the same? How does perception of the opposite sex affect this? In this paper I will give some background as to why men and women might perceive each other differently. Then I am going to talk about the studies I did to show the similarities and differences between what males and females do in college. I will then draw conclusions about perceptions of males and females and how that ties into college culture.

Background

The way that people felt about men and women at college has changed dramatically over time. The first article, written by Charles E. Werts, is called; *A Comparison of Male vs. Female Attendance Probabilities*.¹ This article gives the example of a man who in 1966 won \$56,000. When he was asked what he would do with the money, he said he would use it to send his two sons to college. But, he was sure his two daughters could get married.² This example is showing how people may have perceived women in that time period. This was about fifty years ago. A lot has changed in fifty years, but there are still generations of people that believe that women do not have a right to be educated and that can play a big role in the reason why men and women see each other differently.³

In an article written by Sarah J. Gervais (2012), she did an experiment about how men and women were affected by being patronized in stereotypically masculine domains, including mathematics, engineering and visual perception of the spatial relationships of objects. She found that, “U.S women tend to have lower expectations for positive outcomes, less confidence, fewer perceptions of control, and worse performance relative to men” (Gervais, 481). She also found that women worry about confirming negative gender stereotypes. This may be why Libby Sander (2012) wrote that women do more work and get more involved with

the college community. She also wrote that men spend more time playing games and watching TV. What Sander wrote, seems to go along with popular stereotypes. Sander writes that men are still getting ahead in the world because they are more likely to talk to professors and network. This is the way that others perceive what the experience is like in college, the question is, is it true?

As a society, a lot changed in the past fifty years regarding women and education. It is said that women have outpaced men in enrollment (Engstrom, 407). Craig L. Engstrom wrote an article about drinking related to masculinity. He feels that men do things to show their masculinity such as displaying sexual and aggressive posters, banging on doors or storytelling. Do men feel that they need to express their masculinity in these ways because of perceptions of how men are “supposed” to act? This is a question I do not know the answer to and men probably do not know that answer either. It may seem like the normal thing to do because of their culture and what they are used to seeing. Men aren’t the only ones who have stereotypical behaviors. But, are all men like this, or is this just the perception we have of them? This brings me to the main questions is the male and female experience very different, If so, why? Also, what perceptions play into these differences?

Method

To find the answers I was looking for, I recorded time diaries of both males and females to see how they spent their time. I also used interviews to help me find out more about stereotypes, perceptions and the experiences of a college student. I asked: 1) What were your motivations for coming to college? 2) What do you think people of the opposite sex spend most of their time doing? 3) What do you spend most of your time doing? 4) Would your college experience be different if you were of the opposite sex? If yes, then why?

Findings

I am going to be showing the time diaries of two sophomore males. This is an explanation of what two individuals did in the span of 24 hours.

Male/Sophomore

10:00am - 4:00pm – Work

4:00pm - 4:15pm - Eat

4:15pm - 6:00pm - Schoolwork

6:00pm - 8:00pm - Workout at REC

8:00pm - 8:30pm - Shower

8:30pm - 9:30pm - Play NFL with friends

9:30pm - 10:00pm - Get food with friends

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10:00pm - 12:00am - Watch breaking bad on Netflix

12:00am - 10:00am – Sleep

Male/Sophomore

11:00am - 11:30am - Clean room

11:30am - 12:00pm - Eat

12:00pm - 3:00pm - Play games at REC

3:00pm - 3:30pm - Shower

3:30pm - 5:30pm - Watch Game of Thrones

5:30pm - 6:00pm - Eat

6:00pm - 8:00pm - Homework

8:00pm - 10:00pm - Play videogames

10:00pm - 12:00am - More Game of Thrones

12:00am - 11:00am – Sleep

(Coelho, 2013)

Now I am going to be showing time diaries of freshmen males and what they did in a span of 24 hours.

Freshman Boy

8:30 a.m. wake up

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Watch T.V

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Ate breakfast

10:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m. Class

4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Worked out

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Ate dinner

6:30 p.m. – 12:00 a.m. Did homework and watched T.V.

12:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Slept

Freshman Boy

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Ate lunch

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Studied

5:00 p.m. – 6:15 p.m. Class

6:15 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. Studied

8:15 p.m. – 9:45 p.m. Ate

9:45 p.m. – 2:00 a.m. Studied and watched T.V.

2:30 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. Slept

10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. Class

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. Breakfast

12:00 p.m. – 12:50 p.m. Class

There are some conclusions that can be drawn about the time diaries of men. All of the males in this study watched t.v. or played video games in this twenty-four hour span. Also, all the men except for one went to the Rec center to do some type of physical activity.

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To show whether females and males do similar things with their time, I took a look at four females' time diaries.

Freshman girl

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Eating
 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Class
 3:15 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Homework
 6:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. Hung out with friend
 10:30 p.m. – 12:30 a.m. Skyped with friend
 12 :30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Slept
 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Got ready for class
 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Had class
 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Ate lunch
 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Had class

Freshman Girl

1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Ate lunch
 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Went to Dunkin Donuts
 3:15 p.m. – 5:30 Nap
 5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Ate Dinner
 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Watched t.v
 8:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. Watched a movie
 11:00 p.m. – 9:30 a.m. Slept
 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Just hung out

Freshman Girl

9:00 a.m. woke up
 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Class
 12:30 p.m. Lunch
 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Class
 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Studied did homework
 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. miscellaneous
 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Ate dinner
 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Did Zumba
 8:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. miscellaneous
 11:30 p.m. – 7:00 a.m. slept
 8:00 a.m. – 8:50 a.m. Class

Female, Freshman:

9:00: woke up
 11-12:15: class
 12:30: lunch
 2-3:15: class
 3:30-4:30: study/homework
 4:30-5:30: miscellaneous
 5:30-7: dinner
 1. Introduce
 2. Insert
 3. Interpret

7:00-8:00: Zumba
 8:00-11:00- miscellaneous
 11:30/12:00- sleep
 7:00: woke up
 8:00 to 8:50: class

From looking at the data that I collected from the time diaries, I have found that there is not much deviation in females' days and males' days. All of them, except two, recorded doing some type of school work. They all recorded doing other activities besides work in their day. Some examples are; zumba, watching t.v., hanging out with friends or playing games. This makes me wonder how the college experience can be so different when men and women are spending time doing similar activities during the day. To further investigate this topic, I interviewed five females and four males.¹ I asked them the four questions listed above in **Method**.

When I asked about the motivation to come to college, all nine of them said that they wanted to further their education and get a good job.² I will assume that males and females come to college for the same reasons.³ Next, I asked about what other sexes do. This got a wide variety of answers. The males said that females hangout (which includes spending time with friends), go out, study and sleep. The variety of these answered surprised me because I thought there would be a standard answer or a stereotype. However, asking females about males' use of time was dramatically different. Four out of the five girls said that males spend most of their time gaming and one said sleeping. If one looks at the time diaries above, most of the men did spend time watching movies or playing games, but they did a variety of other activities as well. To me, this seems like a big stereotype that men are not productive with their time and just spend it all on forms of technology. The fact that women are stereotyping men is interesting because from the history it would seem that women would be the ones being stereotyped.

The next question I asked, what you do in your spare time, was the question that showed that boys and girls don't really know what the opposite sex does. Three of the five girls said they spent most of their time hanging out with friends and two said that they spent most of their time studying. When I asked the males the same question, four of the males said that they spend most of their time studying and one said that they spend most of his time sleeping. But, not one girl said that boys spend majority of time studying! I find this to be one of the most interesting parts of my study. Finally, I asked them if they thought their experiences would be different if they were of the opposite sex. All nine of them said yes. Two of the girls answered because if they were boys then they would have less worries and more freedom. When they gave me this answer, I thought that it was a big misconception that men do not work hard. The others that I asked had a hard time telling me why it would be different if they were the opposite sex. This makes me think that males and females think that they are a lot different because that is just what they have always known and it's hard to break away from that. These were all very important findings and now I would like to talk about what they all mean.

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1. Introduce
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Conclusion

Based on the data that I have found, I have come to the conclusion that what people perceive about males' and females' college experience isn't entirely true. There tends to be a stereotype that men spend more time engaging in video games than in their studies. This relates back to the article written by Sanders in the sense that girls have to work harder in school. But, four out of the five guys I interviewed said they spent a majority of time studying. I think this indicates that people have misconceptions of others. Some of these stereotypes can come from movies or the media. I think the major reason why women feel that they have to work so hard is because they feel that they still need to prove themselves. It is still a new concept of women going to college and being educated. This is proven by the fact that men usually get higher paying positions. Joann Wiener wrote, "In 2011, women working full-time earned about 77 cents for each dollar that a man earned, according to data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics". This makes women feel that they need to work harder in college to get a better job.

What does this tell me about college culture? This shows that people have misperceptions about what actually happens in college. I think this mainly come from movies. From a young age, you watch the college movies and they are always at parties and doing other things. What you don't see, is how much work gets put into college. This work is done by both males and female. How can I relate what I found to the world? This study actually taught me a lot and it helped educate me. I also felt like women did more work than men because I always see guys just hanging out watching TV. My interviews showed me that a lot of men put in the time and effort just like women do. I learned from this study that men and women in college do about the same things and that our experiences aren't as different as I once thought. Overall, I think that we would all understand each other more if we took a better look at what others are doing and feeling. I think if we took the time to do this the world would be a much better place.

1. Introduce
2. Insert
3. Interpret

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